

# DIRECT PATH

RAMANA KENDRA  
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Feb - April 2020

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*"Of all the thoughts that rise in the mind,  
the thought 'I' is the first thought."*

*Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi*



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Mahashivratri  
2020

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# Mahashivratri 2020



***32. Om phullambuja vilocanaya namah***

One with eyes bright and beautiful like a fully  
blossomed lotus

***33. Om candrikasita hasa sri manditanana  
mandalaya namah***

One whose comely face was lit up by the cool moonlight  
of a smile

***34. Om cutavatyam samasinaya namah***

Calmly seated in the mango grove



Original ink sketch of Arunachala by Sri Ramana Maharshi from Kunju Swami's notebook

# Direct Path

VOLUME XXII ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY - APRIL, 2020

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## Editor's Note

As the issue is being worked upon, there has been pandemic of Corona virus. It has caused thousands of deaths till now. We hope Bhagavan's grace will guide us all through this difficult time.

I would also like you to update you on some of the important recent events celebrated in our Kendra. First, we celebrated Bhagavan's Jayanti on 11th January by chanting Rudram and Chamakam followed by a talk 'The Sri Ramana Way' by Nikhilanadaji. Next, we had a grand celebration of Karthigai Deepam on 10th December. On the auspicious occasion, Deepam was circumambulated around the kendra by the devotees (led by Shri Ganesan ji) and then it was lit at the top of kendra as a representation of holy Arunachala hill.

With heavy heart I would like to inform you that a long-time devotee T. N Chaturvedi has left this mortal plane on 5th Jan 2020. We are deeply indebted for his service to our kendra and pray to Bhagavan for granting strength to his family members.

Some of the important events (from Bhagavan's time) falling in this current issue (February to April 2020) are as follows:

- February 8<sup>th</sup>: Chinna Swami Day
- February 13<sup>th</sup>: Sundaram Iyer Day
- February 21<sup>st</sup>: Mahashivaratri
- March 20<sup>th</sup>: Sri Vidya Havan
- April 20<sup>th</sup>: Bhagavan's Aradhana Day

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## Call for Articles

As the journal depends on articles from volunteer writers, I would appeal to you to send in articles for our consideration. We wish to keep the range of subjects both wide and diverse covering aspects such as: Bhagavan's life, teachings and experiences related to the practice of his methods; life, teachings and experiences related to the practice of methods taught by other spiritual Masters; teachings and stories from religions other than Hinduism; interpretations of sacred texts and verses; spiritual travel and insights; poetry; feedback and suggestions.

As a guideline, articles can be short (around 750 words), medium (around 1500 words) or in a longer format (around 2300 words). Please send in your contributions through email to [editor.dp@rkdelhi.org](mailto:editor.dp@rkdelhi.org)

We look forward to hearing from you!

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## Coming Home: Getting introduced to Bhagavan's teachings

*Swagat Patnaik*

I became interested in Ramana Maharshi's teachings after a series of serendipitous events during the winter of 2018. And dare I say that his enormous pull has guided me into his fold like a river being guided into the sea. The pull has sometimes been gentle and other times it has been turbulent. But overall the pull has directed me invariably towards our true nature.

It had been three or four years of my relatively serious practice of zen meditation, and I was feeling quite content with it. Being into zen meditation, and largely due to my ignorance, I was skeptical of gurus, rituals, elaborate philosophies, and organized spirituality. But my self-centered scepticism didn't make me immune to Bhagavan's grace. I had been aware of sage Ramana Maharshi from perhaps five or six years, but surprisingly I had never been particularly interested in him. All this changed when I had a knee injury and was unable to practice zazen (Zen sitting meditation). Furthermore, at this time I was also suffering from severe flu which left me disheartened because I was not able to practice with my characteristic zeal. Thus, somewhat

bed-ridden, I spent much of my time reading random articles online as I waited impatiently for recovery. It was during such readings I stumbled on the story of Ramana Maharshi again. Although I knew about the strange case of a teenage boy having a spontaneous awakening which completely changed his behaviour, I had never connected with his peculiar story, nor with his *Advaitic* teachings. I could not relate to his language which to me felt disconnected and esoteric. Moreover, given my unfamiliarity with Hindu traditions, his teachings sounded a bit strange.

Interestingly this time his teachings and anecdotes had an unexpected effect on me. I could barely understand or appreciate his teachings and anecdotes but reading them gave me a warm feeling of coming back home. On the surface, many of his teachings felt very convoluted but deep down there was a feeling of recognition that there is some unshaking truth to it. Over a few days, I went through a lot of his stories and anecdotes until I didn't have any fresh reading material within my reach.

After going through much of the available reading material my fervour for knowing more about Ramana

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Maharshi cooled off for some time. Though days of intense concentration had some beneficial effect on me. It led me to a very uncomfortable yet humbling insight that learning from a master or guru is truly a blessing. In fact, I learned that no amount of reading and self-governed practice is a good substitute for in-person learning from a genuine teacher. This development led to the beginning of a new phase of my practice. I.e. I started longing for an ever so benevolent and strict teacher to guide me.

A couple of weeks later, I suddenly had an urge to know more about the practice of self-inquiry. I had read about the practice but I was finding it difficult to relating it with my experience in meditation. I had a background in yoga, pranayama and a very non-directive practice of zazen. Thus, it was very difficult to grasp what I was supposed to do. So, in the course of a couple of weeks, I decided to visit the Ramana Kendra in Hyderabad (my place of residence then) and see what happens. Initially, I was reluctant to visit because I thought that it might just be a waste of time. I convinced myself that such curiosities are never-ending and may even be a simple distraction. But somehow, my curiosity got the better of me. After all, the intense reading had left me both restless and peaceful. The peace was

due to some faith that had kindled in me while another part of me was restless to be in the company of saints. I just had to know more about Ramana.

Thus, one day I figured that I must go to Ramana Kendra Hyderabad and see the place for myself. From the pics (on google) I could gather that it was a low-profile gathering place for elderly devotees. And given that I was visiting the Kendra in the afternoon, I didn't expect to meet anyone who could enlighten me about Bhagavan's teachings. But I hoped that I would be able to access more reading material about Ramana Maharshi. So, I reached the place and to my utter surprise just entering the assembly hall had a profound effect on me. The hall was dimly lit and refreshingly cool compared to the hot weather outside. I saw an enormous picture of Bhagavan and a small consecrated rock from Arunachala hill. The large hall was empty except for an old man lost in samadhi and a dog sleeping gently near him. There was a deep silence in the hall despite irregular muffled sounds from the traffic outside.

The peaceful silence defied my rational expectations; how can a place have such an ambiance? I was present in a hall, filled with enormous awe, yet my rational mind was not able to understand its cause. Being pleasantly confused, I decided to sit down and

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meditate instead of trying to fit my experiences to my understanding. After all, understanding must upgrade to fit one's experiences and not the other way around.

Interestingly, doing sitting meditation in the hall was very transforming. It was very different from all my effortful and tiring attempts at meditation. My body easily settled into the present moment and automatically went towards a deep investigation of the experience. The general turbulence and the many pulls of the monkey mind temporarily stilled towards a grounded peace. Whether I opened my eyes, moved my body or changed my breathing the stillness remained unchanged. This was new for me, given that I had spent enormous effort practicing

correct posture and breathing as aides to quietening the mind. I realized all my efforts had really been a kind of child's play.

This experience gave me the fresh zeal to meet someone from whom I could learn self-enquiry. I started attending the Sunday *satsang* every week until I finished my research in Hyderabad. Sharing the many fantastic experiences of meeting sagacious men and women of the Kendra would require many more articles to do them justice. In fact, my writing skills would hardly be able to portray their glorious presence. All I can say is it only due to their grace that I have been able to dip my toe into the enormous ocean of Bhagavan's teachings. ■

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An Andhra gentleman of Hospet has returned from pilgrimage to Kailas, Amarnath, etc. He described how fine those places are and how difficult the journey was. He finally asked for something to remind him of Maharshi, meaning some instruction.

M.: You have been to Kailas etc. Have you been to Muktinath?

D.: No. It was too difficult a journey for me. I have however been in Nepal. Have you been to those places?

M.: No, no. I mentioned Muktinath casually.

Then Sri Bhagavan remarked: "To go to Kailas and return is just anew birth. For there the body-idea drops off."

## The Gist of *Chamakam*

Shiromani Vijay



**S**ri Rudram-*Chamakam* occupies a very important place in Vedic literature and the practice of Vedic religion. It is in the heart of *Krishna Yajurveda* and is treasured in the centre of *Taittiriya Samhita*. *Sri Sivapanchakshari Mantram* “*Om namah Sivaya*” is even enshrined in *Sri Rudram*. Hence, we can gauge the importance of *Sri Rudram*. However we should also understand why is it customary to recite *Chamakam* along with *Rudram*?

*Chamakam* does not praise any Gods whereas *Sri Rudram* praises the all-pervading *Rudra* indicating the supreme Brahman. In *Chamakam*, with the refrain “*yagnenakalpatam*”, man asks for everything in the universe to be used for the worship of God – thus making everything holy. Among the

four goals of our life – *Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*, it is only a handful who are evolved enough to chase the *paramapurushartha* – *Moksha*. For the rest, by doing *Yagna* while following the other three goals according to *Shastra*, we get the purity of mind and the grace of the lord to make *moksha* our goal. *Chamakam* shows us the way to fulfil our goals through *Yagna*.

*Chamakam* has 11 sections ‘*anuvaka*’ and with ‘*me*’ (for me) being repeatedly uttered. All the things which a man desires are being entreated. The materials that man is asking for are grouped very logically.

First *Anuvaka* can be called “*sha-reeraanuvaka*”. Starting from food as the foundation, it deals with the human body and its constituents – the vital airs, the external organs of sense and the

internal organ, the mind, and prays that all of them may be healthy and work efficiently. In short, a sound mind in a sound body.

The second is like the extension of persona. This list consists of presence of mind during overwhelming crises and difficulties i.e. patience and fortitude. Next it also deals with name, fame, success in life, worldly affluence, position, and dignity. It is to be noted that ‘*kreedā*’ — sports, and ‘*modā*’ — the exhilaration and pleasure resulting from healthy recreation indoor and outdoor are also included.

The third is the most subjective and comprehensive section called the *Kama* or *Priya Anuvaka*. It sets forth the heart’s desires in this and the next worlds; prays for their due fulfilment; for love and goodwill towards the world and reciprocally that of the world towards oneself. It ends with two beautiful ideas, “*soosa cha me sudinam cha me*” — may this dawn rise auspicious unto me; with refreshment after good sleep let me arise to a good dawn, let the whole day prove a day with no regrets but filled with good deeds conducive to the welfare of myself, the whole world, and may it be dedicated unto God.

The fourth *Anuvaka* is the Food and Drink section which asks for the subtle alchemy to turns what one eats and

drinks into immortal nectar. Partaking of them with others; for successful agricultural operations with rains that favour; for children and relations in whose company alone, one begets ‘*Pustih*’ — a subtle sense of solidity, security, comfort. Then with that casting of the wide net to include all and omit nothing which is so characteristic of the Vedas. The *Chamakam* proceeds in an ascending order of 7 adjectives a) variety, b) plenty, c) recurrence, d) overflow, e) fullness, f) greater fullness, and g) perpetual non-diminution by replenishment of 13 kinds of cereals millets and pulses.’

The fifth *Anuvaka* marks a real bent in the *Chamakam* by going outwards — the earth and the treasures on it and inside it. It lists out stone, sands, clay, rocks, mountains, trees, metals, fire, water, vegetables, and animals. As for completion of religious rites, the ability, presence of the requisite qualifications and wealth are essential.

The sixth which is the shortest, is called the *Ardhendram* in which 20 Vedic gods (Indra being the head of gods) to whom sacrifices are personally offered.

The seventh and eighth are the *Yajna Ayudha* sections. Sacrifice needs instruments by which it is performed and completed. Thus, the *soma* vessels

are *AntarAnga*, proximate appliances by which the sacrifice is directly performed, while those mentioned in the eighth are *Bahir Anga* like *Samit* or holy sticks put into the fire, platform for fire, pestle, mortar (for squeezing the Soma creeper), the place reserved for the fire, apartments for the congregation near the sacrificial shed, ceremonial bathing place, and the invocation to the gods to come and accept their offerings.

The ninth *Anuvakapras* for the main sacrifices including the famous *Asvamedha* or horse-sacrifice along with their accompaniments and the four Vedas.

The tenth *Anuvaka* is the great dedicatory prayer. It is easily the most important. It mentions 31 objects. During the Vedic times in India, economy was agricultural based and people's liferevolved around a cycle of sacrifices. India had coined such an astonishing number of names for cattle in all stages — from that in the embryo to the lordly *Rishabha*, the bull. Finally this *Anuvaka* mentions 'Let all the objects so far mentioned prove fit and efficient for their purposes along with my sacrifices'. It closes with the solemn and impressive invocation. '*anna yajnenakalpatam, yajnoyajnenakalpatam*'.

The 11th and last *Anuvaka* mentions 42 objects. The numbering of these

objects also follows an interesting series. Commentator Vishnusuri says that these numbers indicate the basic principles of our philosophy. Number one points to the all-encompassing *parabrahman*, 3 represents the three *gunas* of prakriti (sattva, rajas and tamas), 5 stands for the panchabhutas and so on. The numbers 24 to 48 point to the various meters for example Gayatri with 24 syllables, *Anushtup* with 32, *Trishtup* 44, *Jagati* 48 — all having 4 divisions or *pada*. Then *chamakam* in the concluding part, reverts to the initial prayer of 12 objects as in the first section starting with '*vajascha me*'. These 12 names are also indicative of *Dwadashaditya*.

At the end of the *Chamakam*, the performer of the sacrifice prays for blessings starting with '*Ida*' devata of *Brahmavidya*, *Brihaspati*, the witness of all our actions representing *Iswara*, all the gods, *vishwadeva*, earth and *pitru*. *Yajamanastates* everyone should bless him because he is offering everything with sweetness with nothing but good vibrations for one and all.

*Chamakam* along with *Sri Rudram*, is one of the most thrilling and spiritually gratifying Vedic prayers. To hear these mantras chanted in chorus by the adept is a unique experience. To also understand the meaning makes it more rewarding. ■

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## Meditation and addiction

Neera Kashyap



In the January 2020 issue of the monthly American journal, 'The Sun Magazine' there is a seemingly irreverent but deeply experiential article on meditation by a writer who uses the pseudonym, 'Sparrow'. 'The Sun Magazine' carries essays, memoirs, true stories and photographs to evoke splendors and heartaches of being human. In existence for forty years as an independent ad-free magazine, each issue is described as "celebrating life, but not in a way that ignores its complexity, the pages exploring the challenges we face and the moments when we rise to meet them."

Sparrow has been meditating twice a day for 45 years, this amounting in his estimate to 22 solid months of meditation in his life. Yet, even after

so many years of consistent practice, he confesses he can't seem to still his mind. The reason why I share several points from this article is because it helps us accept both the discouragement that comes from what we see as our lack of progress, and the inferential benefits we come to experience when, almost addictively, we cannot give up the practice! Also, the article mirrors what may be a common experience for many of us even after years of meditation!

Typical of the irreverent, matter-of-fact but deeply engaging style adopted by the writer, Sparrow writes for starters: "If I put off my first meditation until evening, I get a strange sensation in my brain, as if it were filled with Styrofoam. After I finally do my meditation, I open my eyes and feel..."

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normal. This is quite similar to how junkies describe heroin addiction. At first, you feel an extraordinary high, but after two years you take the drug just to stop feeling awful!”

In fact, Sparrow suggests that the first sitting can be extremely powerful but most of the time it’s about as memorable as using an ATM! As a caution against obsessing about any particularly sacred time, he writes: “You don’t have to meditate upon waking each morning. You can wait till you’re in a doctor’s waiting room filled with frayed copies of *Family Circle* magazine. Close your eyes; count your breaths. Don’t expect inner awakening. Don’t expect happiness. Prepare yourself for boredom and mild exasperation. After a few minutes you’re free to return to the manifold distractions of earthly life.”

He further warns us against expecting joy and happiness from meditation. Bafflement should be a more logical expectation — the recurring questions through the decades being: ‘Why am I meditating? What can this possibly achieve?’ He answers his own doubts with moving humor: “I don’t meditate to achieve mystical heights, but rather to appreciate the rest of my life. I want to wash the dishes with gratitude, like a slow-motion dance.”

Sparrow focuses on his breathing

during meditation, noticing the breath entering and leaving the nostrils — not trying to breathe slowly or quickly — just noticing the flow of air in and out. He writes: “The theory is that, by closing your eyes (or leaving them half open) and doing nothing, you can change your consciousness. Most people are too pragmatic to accept this harebrained notion, but scientific studies suggest that it’s true.” But there is more to noticing the flow of air in and out. Sparrow learns that change is constant, that he is no fixed entity but a river of transforming whims. Worse, he writes: “Meditation asks: Suppose we stop running from the nameless demon. Suppose we turn and behold its twisted, ugly face. What will happen?” What, indeed, will happen? We will probably follow our breathing and our thoughts, and use steady breath and a slowly-steadying mind to let go of thoughts. Sparrow hints at this growing loss of identity: “In meditation, you don’t actually exist. Your body has disappeared. Your social identity is gone. What’s left? Not much. Just a puddle of anxieties and a vague sense of continuity.”

Sparrow sees both the outfalls of meditation: failure and success. “Meditation teaches humility and patience, because you must constantly confront that most disappointing person: your-

self. The inevitability of failure is its main lesson. It is preparation for all the other failures in your life.” Success is more by inference: if a subway train stops in a tunnel, he can just pull out a book and read; if a fight breaks out in a bar, he does not panic — “or, at least, everyone around me panics more. Perhaps meditation teaches us to differentiate between problems we can solve and problems we can’t!”

A combination of failure and success is actually success which comes in subtle ways: “One virtue of meditating is that you learn to forgive yourself: each day you fail at pure concentration, and each day you compassionately accept your failure. Ideally, this self-forgiveness will lead to friend-forgiveness, spouse-forgiveness, even world-forgiveness” writes Sparrow!

Subtle things begin to happen. Trees begin to speak to him, sometimes wordlessly through a sense of consolation and guidance; other times through words. Writes Sparrow: “A tree in Brooklyn said to me today: ‘Most of the time we seek what we don’t have, but sometimes we seek what we already have.’ This tree is describing meditation.”

Though Sparrow recognizes that sound reality in meditation is more

fluid than visual reality and a “mooing cow can become a laughing man”, it is really beneath such irreverence that one detects hints of oneness with the universe. He writes: “Each of us feels that we are separate from our environment, an island of ego looking out through eyeholes. In fact, our lungs are in constant dialogue with the atmosphere, and with all the earthly plants and animals producing that atmosphere. This dialogue literally gives us life. Separation is illusory; atmospheric unity is truth.”

There are also moments of awareness like seeing with complete lucidity an azalea bush on a sidewalk and having no other thoughts — no interference from ideas, concepts, memories. Just fulfillment in a timeless zone. While meditation aims to empty the mind “like the way a pump empties water from the bilge of a ship”, Sparrow confesses: “To be honest, I never quite feel empty after I’ve meditated. But I do feel emptier.”

He would feel ‘emptier’. For buried in this article of hilarious irreverence is a sentence that smacks of a timeless expansion: “When you sit in silence with eyes closed, an hour can become seven, or occasionally open into a spacious eternity.” ■

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# Pradakshina

Michael Highburger



## Part VI

### Atmapradakshina

It has been said that a thing is made perfect not when there is nothing left to add but when there is nothing left to take away. Such is the journey toward the Self—removing the extraneous so that only the essential remains. Since there is nothing other than the Self, even if the world seems to tilt out of kilter, Arunachala remains unmoving within. Yet when we abide in That, the tilted world rights itself and is made new again. “Let the tempest rage, let the oceans rise up, let the earth quake”, wrote one of Bhagavan’s devotees, “the Tree of Knowledge rooted on Arunachala stands immutable. Pilgrims on life’s journey repose in its

shade and countless devotees like birds pour forth their songs from its branches.”<sup>1</sup>

There is only Arunachala, and He dwells within each person. To the physical eye, the pradakshina path around Arunachala seems to trace a circle, the circumference of the base of the Linga-Hill. But spiritually, it is not a circle at all but an inwardly-directed spiral, ever-decreasing in circumference, leading the devotee in a continual diminution until he disappears into his source.

Bhagavan once said that “going round Arunachala is [...] as effective as circuit round the world.” He then added, “Self-circuit (i.e., pivoting round oneself) is [equal to it, for] all

are contained in the Self.”<sup>2</sup> “After all”, he said, “proper pradakshina is going round the Self, or, more accurately, to realise that we *are* the Self and that within us all the countless spheres revolve.”<sup>3</sup>

Doing pradakshina pivoting in place in a circular manner before the deity or the guru is worshipping the divine, an unconscious acknowledgment that the ‘I’ within is the very same Reality as the divinity before whom we prostrate. The benefit of ‘outer’ pradakshina is augmented when we understand its ‘inner’ analogue.

### Bhringi, the Bee-Sage

Sage Bhringi was a great devotee of the Lord and would acknowledge no other, not even Goddess Parvathi. Whenever the Sage went in pradakshina around Lord Siva, he was particular to avoid circumambulating Parvathi. But when Uma merged with Lord Siva in the form of *ardhanariswara*, Bhringi was faced with a problem. How to circumambulate the Lord alone? Taking the form of a bee<sup>4</sup>, he gnawed a hole through *ardhanaris-*

*vara*’s divine form and was thus seemingly able to restrict himself to doing pradakshina around Lord Siva’s half. Shakthi became angry and withdrew all Bhringi’s power, leaving him so weak that he could scarcely stand. Yet, in spite of his debility, the Sage’s devotion continued unimpaired. When Siva made up his mind to grant him liberation, Parvathi was indignant and refused to accompany Mahadeva to Bhringi’s hermitage. The Lord was in a tight spot. His compassion for the devotee who prayed unceasingly for liberation was so great that He could not refuse him. Yet to grant his desire would bring consequences. Hence a quarrel<sup>5</sup> between the Lord and Uma ensued. With much effort, however, Lord Siva succeeded in winning Uma’s appeasement.

Ekabhakta Bhringi was not mistaken in his intention, pure and good as it was. But ignoring the inner, he was deluded in thinking that Siva and Shakthi can in reality be parted. To be sure, the division caused by the Lord’s and Uma’s dispute and the ultimate reconciliation is nothing other than

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1 *Fragrant Petals*, p. 11.

2 S.S. Cohen, 19th June, 1936

3 *Day by Day*, 15-4-46 Morning.

4 Bhringi is Sanskrit for ‘bee’.

5 This quarrel is ritually enacted each year at Pongal on Tiruvoodal Street (or ‘Holy Quarrel Street’), Tiruvannamalai.

divine play, mythically expressing the truism that opposites finally resolve in unity when egoic desires are overcome. To go in pradakshina around Lord Siva is forever and always automatically to go around Parvathi as well. The Self is *akshara*, ultimate and elemental, the imperishable root of Being which is non-dual and thus cannot be divided.

### Conclusion

It is said that originally Arunachalesvarar Temple had no Mother's Shrine because it was assumed that Uma was contained in the linga of the Lord. Finally this is why Bhagavan says that "*atmapradakshina* is the highest form of worship" because *akshara* or *atma*

is the only thing real, the indivisible source, where no distinction can be made between Siva and Shakthi, inner and outer, or self and other.

Once in the Hall, Bhagavan took out the *Ribhu Gita* and read the following line: "Real pradakshina is the meditation that thousands of universes are revolving around me, the unmoving centre of all forms." "I remain fixed, whereas innumerable universes, becoming concepts within my mind, rotate within me." He later said, "The ego which goes round like a whirlwind must get destroyed and must get absorbed in *atma*. That is *atmapradakshina*"<sup>6</sup>. —■

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6 Letters from Sri Ramanasramam, 15th April 1946 & 19th August, 1946.

A young man asked: "Are thoughts mere matter?"

M.: What do you mean? Do you mean 'matter' like the things you see around you?

D.: Yes - gross.

M.: Who asks this question? Who is the thinker?

D.: The thinker is spirit.

M.: Do you then mean that spirit generates matter?

D.: I want to know.

M.: How do you distinguish between matter and spirit?

D.: Spirit is consciousness and the other not.

M.: Can consciousness generate non-consciousness, or light darkness?

## Listen

Rupa Anand



Listen to birds

Listen to children

Listen to words spoken

Listen to that which is unspoken

Listen to open skies

Listen to clouds

Listen to falling rain

Listen to the rhythm of the universe

Listen to the space inside you

Listen to the space inside others

Listen to that which is unheard

Listen to that which is not thought of

Listen to stillness

Listen to nothing at all

Listen with attention

Listen with sincerity

Listen with love

Listen to silence

For God's sake

Just Listen

Every one wants to be heard

Let's live in the silence between words

Let's abide in the silence of knowing

Let's be the silence of it all ■

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## The Play of Divine Consciousness

Kanta Ramchandani



The experience of life is possible only because of the play of Divine Consciousness, giving rise to body-mind-intellect that each individual possesses. This Divine Consciousness is known by different people by different names, such as God, Creator, Almighty, Eternal Power, *Paratma*, *Brahman*, Self, Supreme Energy, and so on.

If the consciousness is withdrawn from this vehicle, its play of perception, emotion, and thought must necessarily halt. This clutching off of consciousness from the inert vehicle is detachment. Krishna advises Arjuna to cut down the tree of multiple experiences with the axe of detachment, and seek 'that to which men go and do not return again.'

That supreme effulgent state attaining which there is no return to this world cannot be illumined by the sun, or the moon, or fire. None of these luminaries which brighten the whole universe, and even the senses of sight, mind, and speech can illumine that supreme state; for it is from the light of *Brahman* that they all derive their light.

A portion of the Eternal Consciousness becomes a living soul in the world of life. It draws to itself the five senses and the mind. Now it may well be asked how a portion can be taken from the Eternal, Immutable, and Infinite Consciousness. The answer is that the Infinite has no parts and can suffer no divisions within itself. With reference to a given mind intellect vehicle, the

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infinite light of consciousness playing upon it is considered by the ignorant as limited by the very vehicle.

The infinite consciousness playing with a subtle body suffers no limitation. Even though the subtle body changes with its joys or sorrows, the essential nature of Divine Consciousness is Eternal indeed. This spark of consciousness vibrates the entire body with life, sustains it by its mere presence and builds sense and mental faculties around itself. No doubt these faculties belong to matter, yet they are expressions of the spirit when it functions through matter. The average man clinging to his desires, fails to recognize the steady light of consciousness in him, whose presence alone makes it possible to have any experience. Those who have got the necessary detachment from the outer field of experience alone come to recognize the joys of this pure Self.

The residuum leftover on withdrawing from external objects is the Truth, which the wise realize as the Self. Just as wild horses are broken in by whipping and stabling them, so also the unruly senses, straying among objects, are lashed by the whip of discrimination, showing that objects are unreal, and are tethered by the rope of pure intellect to the Self by the wise.

Such Self is the eternal truth.

Just as a clear, colourless crystal appears red, blue, yellow, etc, according to the background, so also the Self, pure and untainted, seems to be identical with the body, senses, mind, or intellect when in contact with them. Just as men do their duties in the light of the sun, but the sun does not participate in them, so also the body, senses, etc function in the light of the Self without its participating in them.

The whole objective world is born of ignorance and is transient like a bubble on water. We must know the Self to be distinct from it and identical with Brahman, the Supreme Being. Distinct from the gross body, birth, death, old age, debility etc. And they do not pertain to the Self which is free from qualities and action less. It is eternal, untainted, unchanging, ever free and pure.

If the consciousness which is eternal and perfect is so intimately present in every experience of man, how is it that we, who are living through our vivid experiences at every moment of our existence, miss to recognize this Divine perfection which is so constantly with us everywhere? Only those endowed with the eye of wisdom, declares the Lord, are able to realize it. The ignorant know not the

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soul dwelling in the body, enjoying the objects of senses and departing from the body. It is the wise ones who know the real character of the Self, even when it is connected with the gunas or modes of Prakriti. They realize the Self is really entirely beyond Prakriti, pure, unattached, and the same as consciousness itself under all circumstances.

Sri Krishna explains in the Gita that the light existing in the sun, moon, and fire is his own effulgence. Whatever illuminating power there is in the three luminaries, as well as in the organs presided over by these Gods viz, eye, mind, and speech is nothing but His own effulgence. It is the same Divine consciousness which when expressed through the sun manifests as sunlight, expressed through the moon is moonlight, and through dry fuel is fire. It follows naturally that the light existing in other objects which derive their light from these luminaries is God's own light.

Not only this, but the sustaining power which pervades the whole universe is a part of His own Being. It is He who permeating the soil that supports all creatures by His vital power. The nourishing power of the

moon is a part of His own energy just as the illuminating power is. The heat which maintains temperature in the body and helps in digestion of food is also another manifestation of His potency. Although God is equally present everywhere He is particularly seated in the heart of all creatures as the inner controller of all. It is He who is the source of all memory, knowledge, etc. Seated in the heart of all He rouses these faculties in the minds of all.

In short, we find that the Divine consciousness is the light in the sun, it is the same consciousness that fertilizes the earth; the consciousness; the moonlight that supplies food value to the plant kingdom; it is the Truth itself as the body warmth that presides over the assimilation of food within the body; it is the same light of consciousness that makes it possible for us to gain experience, store away knowledge, and replace ignorance with knowledge. The Eternal principle which thus expresses itself as these phenomenal powers is the very theme indicated in the Vedas as the Eternal reality, and to know it and bring it under our experience is to know the Infinite. ■

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## Why I sit?

Ankit Chhabra



Every morning I wake up and look at my watch to see how much time I can manage to sit with myself in silence. On good days, I can find an hour of comfortable quietude. While on rushed days I am still able to squeeze out 10–15 minutes in peace. Every evening before going to bed, I follow the same routine. This time the physical energy left after a day's work guides me how much time I would be able to sit. Then, I can go to sleep with a calm mind. I am grateful that I have been able to maintain this simple daily ritual which is now one of the most important things I do.

When my parents and friends ask me about this habit, I use a colloquial term 'silence'. I don't like to use the term 'meditation' because it has many different meanings associated with

it based on the background culture. Furthermore, terming it as silence also gives me the flexibility to abide in it for more than just a couple of times in the day. Silence, for me, has become a day-long pursuit and a life-long practice. It is as habitual as brushing twice a day. I wish to get to a stage where I can stay rooted in silence and respond to all situations from an inner spaciousness.

The colloquial usage of many words often shies us away from exploring its deeper meaning. Before I proceed any further, I would like to bring some clarity on the experience of silence itself. If I were to translate Silence to a more accessible term for Indians, I would call it *Shantam*. It is not peace, not inaction. Rather it is a very active and dynamic state of existence, yet you are in a continuous state of effortless observation.

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As the moment arises, you respond spontaneously and harmoniously. It is like having a real-time slow-motion perception which allows you to closely observe the laws of nature unfolding within. When you are rooted in Silence you maintain a mature detachment. You are neither too far nor too near to the field of action. This allows you to see clearly and be equanimous. When you are in such deep awareness, you can observe and direct your choices. Thus, over a longer time period, you create the world you want to live in.

Another question that becomes imperative while doing these practices is gauging the progress made in this journey. Simply put, where am I on my journey? I would call myself a beginner at best with a strong aspiration to keep going further. I have been practicing in a disciplined way for at least an hour every day for five years now. From last year, I have been working on an integrated practice of maintaining a constant thorough awareness throughout the day. Faith and Discipline have been my allies on this journey. Most of the time I feel I have no lasting insights; thus it feels like walking in the dark. My faith in these age-old practices which millions of our ancestors have perfected over centuries keeps me going. Many times it is a struggle keeping my mind calm or

simply stay awake. But this discipline only requires you to keep putting small efforts mostly in the beginning. This insight has really helped me to stay on track on most days. Furthermore, the momentary glimpses of boundless compassion and universal oneness have also helped me in my journey. These blissful experiences, though extremely rare, give me the confidence to walk on the path despite the great grounds that I need to cover.

Mind training is one of the key practices in all eastern traditions. These techniques are aimed at cultivating different habits of the mind which can help address human conditions particularly related to suffering. Some of the processes in the practices are strengthening concentration, increasing awareness and cultivating compassion to help us understand our basic nature. These practices vary in intensity and commitment. But the common end goal for many of these traditions is creating a healthy life for yourself and a healthy environment for everyone else. But many aspects of these goals can't be described by limited human faculties. It can only be known through first-hand experience. Thus, any attempt to force it or imagine it would only be a distraction. Any such desires or compulsions can be dealt by simply being aware of them and doing nothing about them.

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They will eventually go away. Furthermore, it is also very important to remain extremely cautious of many vivid interesting momentary experiences on the way. As any attachment towards them can become a serious hindrance. Whether there is ease or discomfort in the practice, actively surrendering to the same is always advisable in these such self-explorative practice.

My motivation for spending 10–15 hours each week in dedicated silence is to grow strong and stable from within. I aspire to have an inner anchor that fulfills and maybe even transcends my needs for safety and security. By now, I know for sure that a stable mind doesn't cling or entangle itself with any particular event or experience. So many insecurities and vulnerabilities that I am carrying at the moment don't entangle me and over time these get transformed into more wholesome attitudes. Instead of reacting unconsciously, I can distance myself from my anger at the moment it is arising. My teachers and texts tell me that over time such afflictive states of mind can completely be transcended so that they no longer control you.

Like Gandhi and Vivekananda, I wish to be the change I want to see in the world. I am trying to live my life as a karma yogi, doing every act in selfless service. My work and relationships are

a means for growth from within. Daily Silence is a practice that helps me build my inner capacities to take on these tough challenges and thrive. And I am only beginning to dip into this ocean of this wisdom. No one can walk on this path alone. So, in my selfish interest, I invite the readers to consider taking up a daily practice of silence for themselves.

You can identify some foundational practices which work for you and make them part of your daily routine. Maintain a scientific attitude by creating small experiments, collecting evidence to find out your needs and what works for you to move towards that end. Having a community also helps to hold conversations about the practice, share insights and build upon each other. Once you have found a path or a practice (which may take a few years) it is important to keep walking on it. Maintain your daily practice. Some effort may be required in the beginning but over time it will become an enjoyable experience for yourself and everyone around you.

I dedicate this sharing towards your inner-growth and well-being. ■

\* The title of this essay is inspired by a similar one by Paul Fleischman on his practice of Vipassana meditation. You can find it here - <http://bit.do/whyisit> [*e-mail: chhabra99@gmail.com*]

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## Niranjanananda Swami (Chinna Swami)

V. Ganesan



[The following excerpts about Chinna Swami have been taken from V. Ganesan's book 'Ramana Periya Puranam'. 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 is Chinna Swami Aradhana Day.]

Niranjanananda Swami or better known as Chinna Swami bore the burden of managing the ashram, despite all its problems and oppositions. He carried both the 'iron heart' and the 'rose petal heart' for managing Ramanashram for more than 20 years as the Sarvadhikari (administrator). He gave his complete selfless surrender and utmost service to his guru and elder brother Bhagavan for spreading virtue and goodness in the world. It was during his administration that most of the ashram buildings were constructed and he was instrumental in directing the administration of the

ashram even after Bhagavan's *mah-anirvana*.

Niranjananada Swami (Nagasundaram) was the younger brother of Bhagavan. It is known that during his early years he got married and got a job as a clerk. But owing to a series of unfortunate incidents, he nearly lost everything in his life. Firstly, his elder brother Nagaswami died, soon his wife also died leaving behind a little boy (T. N. Venkataraman) and then he also lost his ancestral property. While his only source of comfort was his mother Akhagammal, but she too had gone away to Arunachala to stay with Bhagavan. These tragic incidents drove him to a state of surrender, submission, and service. So, he decided to leave behind his son to his sister and left behind everything

to take up living with his brother and mother at Arunachala. Thus, he came under the ever so strict and watchful eyes of Bhagavan. When Nagasundaram came to Skandashram, having been beaten by life's trials, he too became an ascetic. He took to austere living and begged in the streets of Tiruvannamalai for food. He lived a very reclusive life and contemplated different works of Bhagavan. Furthermore, he was also assisted in taking up ochre robes of *sanyasa* by Ganapati Muni. Thereafter, he was referred to as Chinna Swami (Junior Swami) as Bhagavan, his elder brother was the senior swami.

With the passage of time, the ashram activities gradually grew around the mother's samadhi (Matrubhuteswara). The mother's shrine became the nucleus of the present Ramanasramam. Soon it became apparent that a sole manager needs to be appointed and Bhagavan selected Niranjanananda swami. And him being a person without any spiritual opinion, he showed a strong will in the ashram's management work and an unobtrusive prism for Bhagavan's teachings. Thus, in 1930 with Bhagavan's blessings and other devotee's support, Chinna Swami was given the responsibility to manage the material aspect of the ashram.

Chinna Swami was very austere, disciplined and strict. It is this strictness which earned him a bad name. However, he never cared about that. He was so austere that he never spent a single penny from the ashram funds for his personal use. He had two friends (devotees of Bhagavan, of course) who provided for his little needs like toothpowder, hair oil, betel leaves, betel nut, and an umbrella. At that time, he was the sole manager, the sarvadhikari, managing all the funds with no board or trust to verify the accounts. Yet, he never compromised on his honesty. The old devotees said he was so austere that when his clothes tore, he mended them himself and wore them again. He could have bought new clothes, but he would wait for months until some wealthy man came and distributed clothes to the residents of the ashram. Even then, he would take only one cloth for his personal use. Long before anyone was employed, he was the sole cook at the ashram and attended to all the ashram needs.

By 1938, Chinna Swami needed assistance in the ashram. So, he sent word to his son (my father) and the whole family to join him. I was two years old when my father brought me to Ramanasramam. Chinna Swami was just as strict with his son. His

strictness and discipline can be very well gauged by his advice given to his son ‘Venkato, we are commanded by Bhagavan to manage this ashram. We are his slaves and have to do this, generation after generation. But we do not have any special rights over this place. We should dedicate ourselves to do service with the attitude of a dog guarding a haystack. The dog will not eat the hay and it will not allow the stray cattle to eat the hay either.’

Bhagavan may not look after his own body at all. We have seen how Arunachala took the form of many mothers and started taking care of Bhagavan’s body. Otherwise, when it was in Pthalalinga, the underground niche, Bhagavan’s body would have wasted away and it would not have been able to spread the message of the Self to us. The guru will never ask for his needs to be fulfilled. People close to him should know what they are and take care of them. The second principle is to look after the premises where the guru lives, keep it clean and secure it from problems. The third is

to collect and preserve the guru’s teachings. The fourth is, after having done all this or while doing one or all of this, the devotee should put the teachings into practice and attain the truth and also help others attain it.

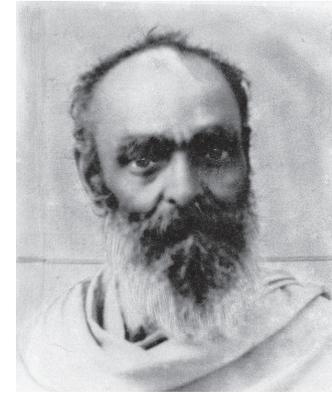
Since Chinna Swami attended very scrupulously to the first three principles of service and had therefore no time to spend on individual *sadhana*, Bhagavan bestowed his blessings on him. In his last few days, he expiated for all his mistakes. His body suffered greatly. Then, Bhagavan gave him release. Viswanatha Swami was witness to this. In his dying moments, Chinna Swami put out his hands happily and Viswanatha Swami said, ‘I could feel it — Bhagavan came and took him and helped him get absorbed in Arunachala.’ Let us remember Chinna Swami, one of the biggest boulders that rolled down from Arunachala to serve our master; the master whose only mission (if at all he had a mission) is to make his own state available to all of us — the state of ‘I AM’.

Another devotee: Is it not that the ‘I’ exists only in relation to a ‘this’(aham - idam)?

M.: ‘I’, ‘this’ appear together now. But ‘this’ is contained (vyaptam) in the ‘I’ - they are not apart. ‘This’ has to merge into and become one with ‘I’. The ‘I’ that remains over is the true ‘I’.

## T. K. Sundaresa Iyer

V. Ganesan



[The following excerpts about T.K. Sundaresa Iyer have been taken from V. Ganesan’s book ‘Ramana Periya Puranam’. 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020 is SundaresaIyer Day.]

In the Hindu culture and tradition, we are all familiar with the term ‘guru’, its meaning and significance. Nevertheless, a few may recognize the significance of an *upaguru*. We owe equal respect to the *upaguru*, the one who points us to the guru. The *upaguru* may be a book, a tree, or a friend; it does not matter. The *upaguru* and the guru are to be looked upon with equal regard and reverence. We are as indebted to the *upagurus* we are to the guru.

After my mother, my only other *upaguru* has been my school teacher T.K. SundaresaIyer. His humility

was exceptional and his simplicity extraordinary. He would pay a lot of attention to me and he would make me prostrate before many different holy men and lady saints. Some people in Ramanasramam, would object to this and say, “TKS is a crazy man, and he is making Ganesan crazy too. He makes him prostrate before eccentric people, saying that they are all holy saints and sages.” I believe it is the extraordinary grace of my master, Bhagavan, which guided me to TKS, my teacher.

TKS came to Bhagavan in 1903, when Bhagavan was in Virupaksha cave. He was then just twelve years old. One of his relatives told him, “Lord Arunachala himself is seated in human form in Virupaksha cave.” In those days, Bhagavan was mostly in silence. Rarely would he utter a word

or two. When TKS came, Bhagavan, who had his eyes closed, opened them and blessed him with a glance of grace. Later, TKS told me, "It was not a human body that I saw. It was a living statue of burnished gold. Bhagavan looked at me. There were about ten people around him singing Tamil songs when Bhagavan very compassionately looked at me and asked, 'Won't you sing a song for me?' It was a surprise for everyone else because Bhagavan was mostly in silence and rarely asked for anything." A thrilled TKS sang a song by the saint Sundarar, one of the sixty-three saints about whom Bhagavan had read in *Periapuranam*. The translation of the song is, "No other support do I have except your holy feet, oh Lord, by holding onto them I shall win your grace. Ancient sages have sung your praises. Oh Lord! Grant me the boon that my tongue should constantly repeat your sacred name even if my mind strays away." When TKS finished, Bhagavan was very happy. He said, "Yes, yes, that is what should be done." This became the first *upadesa* for this twelve year old boy. All his life, until his last moment, he carried with him three or four books containing hundreds of Tamil songs composed by saints and sages. This first *upadesa* was his guiding light.

Every day, this boy would go to Virupaksha cave and spend time with Bhagavan.

In the course of time, he became a teacher. He began to have doubts about his spiritual development. One day, he felt, "Why should I go and be with this saint? I am not improving at all. There is no perceptible change in me." For three months he did not go to Bhagavan. One night, he woke up and saw his pillow wet with tears. He felt, "Oh, I miss my guru!" Early in the morning, he ran up the hill. Bhagavan, who was now staying in Skandashram, stepped out just then and waited for TKS. When TKS saw Bhagavan in the distance, he could not control his emotions. He ran crying, fell at his feet and drenching them with his tears said, "Bhagavan! Please forgive me!" Bhagavan lifted him up and said, "This is the hundredth day." Bhagavan, had been counting.

Over the years, while being in contact with Bhagavan and Ganapati Muni, TKS learned a number of traditional scriptures. Infact, this learning (Bhagavad Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam) and being close with his family mantra '*Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*' led him to compose the now famous mantra '*Om Name Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*'. As soon as this mantra dawned within his heart, it continued

resounding with it without a gap. He told this mantra to Bhagavan and he gave it his full approval.

Before coming and settling down permanently at the ashram, I had worked in two different firms. I had divided my first month's salary from each firm into two and sent it to my two *upagurus* - my mother and my teacher, TKS. Those were the last days of my revered teacher. He was very seriously ill and bed ridden in a house opposite the ashram. I was visiting him every day. It was his last day. He said, "Ganesa! These people who look after me are very poor people. So, please utilize the amount in this envelope for my funeral expenses. I

want you to carry my body, chanting, Arunachala Siva all the way to the cremation ground."

Though I was crying all the time, I asked him, "How did you get so much money?" He smiled graciously, and said, "You remember, twice you had sent me your first month's salary for my daily expenses. I did not spend it; they were so dear to my heart. Now, you yourself can spend it on my last journey — back to Arunachala!" He gave me a pat on my head and said, "This is my blessing to you! See! I am giving you my all!" Can anything else in the world equal the beauty and splendour of that single touch of wisdom?!

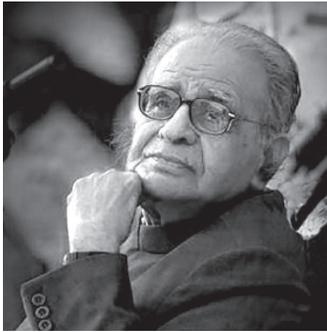
**Another from the group asked: How is the ego to be destroyed?**

M.: Hold the ego first and then ask how it is to be destroyed. Who asksthis question? It is the ego. Can the ego ever agree to kill itself? Thisquestion is a sure way to cherish the ego and not to kill it. If you seekthe ego you will find it does not exist. That is the way to destroy it. In this connection I am often reminded of a funny incident whichtook place when I was living in the West Chitrai Street in Madura. Aneighbour in an adjoining house anticipated the visit of a thief to hishouse. He took precautions to catch him. He posted policemen in muftito guard the two ends of the lane, the entrance and the back-door to hisown house. The thief came as expected and the men rushed to catch him. He took in the situation at a glance and shouted "Hold him, hold him. There — he runs — there —there." Saying so he made good his escape. So it is with the ego. Look for it and it will not be found. That is the way to get rid of it.

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## T. N Chaturvedi (1928—2020): Administrator-Scholar

*Atul Chaturvedi*



There are two kinds of civil servants. There are the time-servers, who mark their attendance and can't wait to go home. Then, there are those who see the civil service as a form of Seva (service). T. N. Chaturvedi, former President of Ramana Kendra, Delhi, who passed away on January 5, 2020, was of the second kind.

Triloki Nath Chaturvedi was born in the village of Tirwa, in the Kannauj area of Uttar Pradesh on January 18, 1928. His father, Pandit Kamta Nath Chaturvedi, was a lawyer and homeopath. He lost his mother, Vidyavati, when he was less than a year old. After studying at a local school, he went to Allahabad University, where he obtained an MA in LLB degree. He stood First Class throughout MA and was

presented the University Gold Medal for Economics and Political Science. He joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in 1950. He married Prakash Dubey (1933-89) in 1952. They had a daughter and three sons.

He was attached to the Rajasthan cadre of the IAS and served there in various capacities, such as District Magistrate of Ajmer, Private Secretary to the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, and Secretary in the departments of Industries, Mines, Town Planning, and Tourism. He was also Chairman, Jaipur Development Authority. As a Fellow of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (an arm of the World Bank), he went to the US in the 1950s. He was Joint Director, National Academy of Administration, Mussorie (1967-71). Some of his il-

lustrious trainees are Gopal Gandhi, Wajahat Habibullah, and Aruna Roy. He served as Chief Secretary, Delhi Administration (1971-73); Director, India Investment Centre (1973-76); Chief Commissioner, Chandigarh (1976-78); and Chairman, Rajasthan Industrial and Minerals Development Corporation (1978). He was Director, Indian Institute of Public Administration (1978-82). He was Union Education Secretary (1982), and then Union Home Secretary (1982-84). He was deemed retired from the IAS upon his appointment as Comptroller and Auditor General of India (1984-90). He joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1991 and was twice elected from Uttar Pradesh (1992-2002). He was Governor of Karnataka (2002-07) and Kerala (2004).

An active parliamentarian, he was on the panel of vice-chairmen of the Rajya Sabha. He was Chairman of the Committee on Industry and Delhi Public Library. He was also a member of the Committees on external affairs, defense, public accounts, money laundering, patents, and on the securities scam. He was a member of the Indian Council of Social Science Research and Asiatic Society (Kolkata). He was also Chancellor of Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth.

He was Vice-Chairman, Nehru Me-

morial Museum and Library (NMML) Society and the Chairman of its Executive Council (2001-04). At the time of his death he was Chairman, Finance Committee, NMML. He was elected as India's representative on the Executive Board of UNESCO in 2001. He was the first *pathakprahari* (ombudsman) of Navbharat Times in 1990.

T N Chaturvedi led an active retirement life. As he once observed, the word retirement is not in his dictionary. At the time of his death he was Chairman, IIPA; Chairman, Hindi Bhawan; Chairman, Institute for Studies in Industrial development; Chairman, Lala Diwan Chand Trust; Vice-Chairman, Rajendra Prasad Bhawan Trust. He was also Vice-President, DAV Managing Committee, and the Chairman of PGDAV College, Delhi.

He was editor of the Indian Journal of Public Administration from 1970 to 1998. He was editor of the Hindi monthly Sahitya Amrit from 2007 till his death. He published two books, Transfer of Technology, and Comparative Public Administration (in Hindi and English). He edited or co-edited over 30 books. Academically inclined, he wrote articles and gave lectures on subjects as varied as public administration, ethics in public life, accountability, good governance, the Renaissance in India, Sri Sarada Devi, etc. He was

an accomplished writer and speaker in both English and Hindi.

Among the many awards that he received, some of the most important ones are Padma Vibhushan for public service (1991); The Magsaysay Plaque for Distinguished Contributions to Public Service and Public Audit by EROPA, Manila (1987). He also received the first DAV Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2017.

TN Chaturvedi had always been interested in spiritual subjects since childhood. While open to all paths, he had a special regard for Ramana Maharishi. He had seen references to Ramana Maharishi in books and newspapers over the years, but he really became aware of him after his death, the news of which was carried on the front pages of all newspapers. In the early 1950s in Allahabad, he read a small magazine in Hindi which had a two-page story on the Maharishi. A list of books on and about the Maharishi was also given, with instructions on how to procure them. At the urging of his wife, he sent a money order to Tiruvannamalai, and sometime later received a few books. Over the years he bought every publication from Ramanashram, in all their different editions. He also sought out books on Ramana from other publishers. The collection of books related to Ramana in his library covers an entire

shelf.

Desirous of visiting Ramanashram, he finally reached there in 1965 and spent a few days. This was the first of many visits that he made over the years. He was in touch with followers of Ramana in Delhi, and became President of the Ramana Kendra, Delhi in 1989 and continued till 2008. During his tenure as Governor of Karnataka, he made several visits to Tiruvannamalai, sometimes on the way to and from Puducherry. He wrote a foreword to 'Face To Face with Ramana Maharshi' and went to Hyderabad for a function where the book was released by Shri VS Ramanan, President of Ramanashram. His last darshan of Arunachala was in 2014.

A life-long lover of books, he left behind a collection of over a lakh in Hindi and English. Always smiling, he was active till the very end. TN Chaturvedi scaled the heights that he did thanks to his sterling qualities of heart and mind. It was his legendary probity in personal and public life that led the distinguished jurist Fali Nariman to describe him in a lecture in 1990—knowing that he was in the audience—as one of the finest civil servants that independent India had seen. His death has left us all the poorer. ■  
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## Kendra Bulletin

*Summaries of satsangs and events - December 2019 to February 2020*



Taking up Adhyaya 2, Valli 1, Verses 1-3 of the Kathopanishad, Swami Prabuddhanandaji spoke in detail of the extraversion of our senses which point outwards - towards objects. Though this attribute is pervasive and the cause of our unhappiness, there are the rare ones capable of looking at their own existence, thus being reflective, non-violent and incorruptible. Vedanta points out that the Truth is none other than you. This knowledge is possible through the exercise of our will, both through self-control and through Self-reflection. We can use our will to control our anger, irritability, attachments, impulses, albeit any impurity, so we become peaceful. Society can survive only on the basis of self-control - so essential for social and individual peace - for responsibility adds to social security.

It is silly to crave for material objects for happiness is not an attribute of any object. Our world is physical but our truth is of a conscious existence wherein the conscious do not seek fullness from any object nor do they interpret the incomplete to be complete. No desire can be eternally fulfilled despite this enormous creation, craving being our real enemy. We revel in our senses. As senses are within the realm of perception, perceptions become pleasures. Yet the senses and the mind are also the means for our understanding. When the *jiva* understands his sole conscious identity, he understands it to be the unlimited conscious being – infinite and incomparable. Man has only one topic to understand: Himself.

--Neera Kashyap

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## December 10<sup>th</sup>

**K**arthigai Deepam was celebrated in sacred splendor at Ramana Kendra, the sacredness of the occasion visible right at the entrance through artistic colourful rangolis leading up to the holy shrine. The radiance of Bhagavan's portrait was enhanced by a beautiful white, yellow and purple flower garland.

The evening began with the recitation of Ramana Ashtothram and Upadesa Saram. After Ganapathy Homam, traditional lamps were lit, and the three priests present for the occasion chanted Rudram Chamakam. This sacred chant, resonating in all directions, felt as if the sound was omnipresent in a way similar to the atmosphere of the Samadhi Hall at Ramanashram during puja time. Devotees gathered in large numbers sat in silence, absorbed in prayer.

Fruit, flowers and sweets were offered at the lotus feet of Bhagavan whose serene glance illumined the shrine like the Deepam lit and burning before his image. The Deepam was then devotionally held on the head by Shri Ganesan ji who led the circumambulation around the holy shrine, devotees following him in this symbolic walk representing the circumambulation of the Arunachala Hill. The fire was then carried up to the building's roof top where it burnt all night, recreating for the devotees present the *darshan* of the Deepam lit on the Arunachala Hill.

It is said that this burning light on the hill's crest is the manifestation of Lord Shiva as Agni Lingam. Its *darshan* is believed to annihilate ignorance and to invoke in the seer of this light of lights the self-effulgent image of Lord Shiva and the Self, serving thereby as a means for attaining immortality.

On this special evening, senior devotee Smt. Jayanthi Aiyer ji rendered compositions aptly chosen for the occasion. She sang three *kritis* composed by Mutuswami Dikshitar, the lyrics highlighting the spiritual significance of Karthigai Deepam. She ended her concert with a song evoking the divinity of Bhagavan through many phrases in his praise, devotees joining in with fervor.

The event concluded with the recitation of the 108 verses of Aksharamanamalai followed by Prasad.

-- Marie Elangovan

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## December 22<sup>nd</sup>

Recapitulating verse 9 from 'Song Celestial', Bhagavan's selection from the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Ambarish Dave ji explained how the verse distinguishes Truth from Non Truth: That which exists is the Truth/ Being/Atman/Brahman, standing on its own as the substratum; the world exists as the manifestation of Brahman which, as the substratum, is the basis for the shape and form, just as clay is the basis for pot. On disintegration, what remains is clay. The value is of the **substratum**, not of the shape or form or the different manifestations. Verse 10 states that the subtlest of Bhootas i.e. Space (Akash) is everywhere but remains untouched by anything. Similarly Atman, which permeates the body does not get affected by the body's attributes, indicating that Atman is beyond space or rather the very basis of space. Verse 11 revealed that the Supreme state is not illumined by the sun nor by its reflected light - the moon, nor by fire. The Atman is Self-luminous and Self-effulgent. It is the Supreme attainment.

Deviating from the text, Shri Ambarish Dave ji delved comprehensively into certain significant Vedantic principles: Space (Aakash) is made up of thoughts which are emotions, the finest of them being Love - the basis of all, the One Brahman. The manifestation of Brahman presents itself as duality, also called *vikarain* in the scriptures. This modification that 'I see the world' as different from me happens due to *gunas*, a powerful aspect of *Prakriti /Maya* which is the power of Brahman Itself. The world is an interplay of *gunas* as explained by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita: '*Gunaguneshuvartante*'. (The one who is a knower of the facts about the varieties of *gunas* and actions does not become attached). This is the basis of Creation and our endless entanglements in it.

The instruments available to us to experience the world are only the five senses which are mutually independent of each other, i.e. with the eye, one can only see and not touch or smell. Though the world is limited to only the five senses, we attempt to perceive Brahman with the limitation of these senses. In deep sleep, rid of the body and sense limitations, we experience peace and harmony, i.e., we experience a spark of Brahman for a brief while. But deep sleep is transient and a negative state (*tamas* or darkness) and Brahman is Total Awareness! Hence It cannot be experienced without the True Knowledge by which we know the nature of everything, nothing else remaining to be known.

Knowledge is of two types: 1) Lower knowledge or knowledge of the world - *Para Vidya*. 2) Higher Knowledge or knowledge of Brahman - *Apara Vidya* or the systematic process of knowing the interrelationships between the individual, world and God as taught by a Self-realised Guru. Thus the points to reflect upon and understand are: 1) The World is the Creation of Brahman. 2) There is no *jagat* in Brahman but there is Brahman in *jagat*, just as clay is contained in pot but pot is not contained in clay. 3) The appearance that there is Brahman in *jagat* is due to *vikara* or the strong power of *maya*. Hence Brahman is One, One without a second: '*Ekamevaadvitiam*'. It appears as many due to Its own power, *Maya*. Though One, It is seen as many: '*Ekam Brahma viprahbahunavadanti*'. This confusion is due to the inherent ignorance of our true nature and can be corrected only through Supreme Knowledge, the path being through detachment - *Vairagya*, *vaidik karma* (doing our duties by serving God and humanity) and through transcendence of *maya* achieved by a complete surrender to His Will.

-- *Rashmi Vyas*

### January 11th

Bhagavan's 140<sup>th</sup> Jayanti was celebrated with great devotion at the Delhi Kendra on 11th January, 2020. The winter morning cold was mellowed by the warmth of marigold garlands adorning the shrine, while Bhagavan himself was garlanded with white and yellow chrysanthemums highlighted by pink and orange gerberas. As 125 devotees gathered in a steady stream, they overflowed onto the covered shamiana set up outside the shrine. Sri Ganesh puja was followed by the chanting of Ramana Ashtotharam and Upadesa Saram. The recitation built up power, the energy rising to a crescendo with the chanting of Rudram and Chamakam by the team led by Shri Raman Ramalingam. By this time a crisp sun had risen and filled the shrine with golden radiance in which all basked for five minutes of reverberating Silence.



A talk followed on 'The Sri Ramana Way' by Swami Nikhilanandaji. He elaborated on the famous verse 2 of Chapter 2 of Ramana Gita: 'Hridayakuharamadhyekevalam brahma matram...'. Swamiji said that this verse is important and should be permanently engraved in our awareness as it embraces the entire Advaitic philosophy: The eternal infinite Brahman abides in the tiny sanctum deep within each heart as the ever-effulgent Self which we need to realize. Just as one needs taste but one drop of water at the seaside to know the taste of the entire ocean, so by getting to know the Self one gets to know Brahman. For this one needs to separate the pure from the impure, the *aham* from the *ahamkara*. There are three steps that facilitate us: the use of breath restraint; the use of the mind to seek the Reality through *atmavicara*; surrender to the divine will. This lucid exposition was followed by the recitation of Bhagavan's composition, Aksharamanamalai led by Smt. Jayanthi Aiyar.

As a first, this celebration concluded with Shri Anuraag Sundar's heartfelt words of appreciation of the Kendra's staff members with certificates of appreciation presented to each by the Kendra's Vice president, Shri Adarsh Bhatiani. As the main facilitators of the smooth functioning of this institution, the staff included the lean but sprightly Manager, Shri G V Narayanan who, single-handedly foiled a robbery at the shrine a few days earlier. The others honoured were Shri S. Mariappan, Shri Rajesh Saini, Shri Shiv Kumar Yadav, Shri Lalit Manjhi and Shri Raj Kumar, who together manage the accounts, communications, cleanliness, light, sound and other systems, and the exquisite garden.

Sunlight by now had touched every heart, and Bhagavan's eyes glowed with special luminosity. Some devotees took advantage of this energy and lingered at the shrine, while the rest thronged the bright sunlit hub behind the shrine hall to share Bhagavan's prasada as conclusion to the day's celebration.

However the echoes continue, as people's happy memories, photographs and observations continue to be shared on WhatsApp groups. Plans for pilgrimages to Sri Ramanasramam are being made, love for and from Arunachala has become tangible to more devotees, and the Kendra was again validated as a conduit for Sri Ramana's Grace and teachings.

---*Bharati Mirchandani*

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### January 19<sup>th</sup>

Recapitulating verses 10 and 11 from ‘The Song Celestial’, Shri Ambarish-Daveji spoke of the Atman as being subtler than the subtlest, unaffected and unattached to all that it pervades, Self-luminous - all existing and seen in its light. Verse 12 takes up the *avyakta* or unmanifest aspect of this State, a sample of which is seen in deep sleep wherein, even without direct perception, we are one with That. Since That highest of states is proclaimed to be both *avyakta* and *akshara* (imperishable), we must trust *shastra pramanam* that substantiates it so. Verse 13 emphasises the delusion of *moha* wherein we get attached to the notion of self-pride or *maansamaan*. Only those who have conquered *moha* and the duality of likes and dislikes attain that *padam* of *avyayam* or the immutable state. Here Shri Ambarishji made an important observation: “Hindu philosophy is criticised for emphasising desirelessness. What we must aim for is not to give up desire per se, but the desire for a particular fruit of action. The object of desire is neutral. It is the division in our minds that compel us towards desire and aversion through the duality of likes and dislikes,” he said.

In explaining Verse 14, Shri Ambarishji once again emphasised the value of the *shastras* in setting the right direction to our lives, Bhagavan Ramana himself placing great value in their truth. “There is a difference between a successful person and a successful life. *Moksha* being our ultimate goal or *purushartha*, a successful life is to follow a given *purushartha* with the ultimate aim of *moksha* in view,” he said. Verse 14 also suggests that if we follow our own whims, we will neither attain *siddhi* nor *sukham*.

--Neera Kashyap

### February 9<sup>th</sup>

Swami Prabhuddhanandaji’s talk focussed on the uniqueness of the Atman and It’s all-encompassing features. Explaining verses 3 to 5 from Kathopanishad’s Chapter 2, Section 4, Swamiji succinctly highlighted how the presence and the absence of a phenomenon are both experienced by our ever present BEING or Atman. It equips us with the vital intelligence to experience all forms and sense perceptions of the outside world. There is nothing that is not known to the Atman.

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The life centre in *jiva* that controls and directs all physical, mental and intellectual activities is the divine spark of the Self. It is one’s own Being which is eternal and infinite in nature. It is beyond definition, therefore beyond language.

The means by which man perceives all objects in waking or dream is the great omnipresent Atman. It is the illuminator of our awareness in all situations. *Jiva* needs to focus on the Atman to get rid of a false identification with the body, mind and intellect, and so discover himself to be nothing other than the Supreme Consciousness. In actuality, he is the all-pervading Brahman but thinks himself to be limited.

He who knows this Atman as the sustainer of life, as the Lord of time and as someone intimate and close rather than distant and far, becomes fearless. Swamiji gave the familiar example of water and waves, wherein the wave has to look within to find water which is not outside of it.

----Indra Sharma

### February 16<sup>th</sup>

Recapitulating verses 15-16 from ‘The Song Celestial’, Shri Ambarish-Daveji began by saying that one who sees the eternal imperishable Brahman in all human beings - Absolute knowledge gained through single-minded devotion or bhakti - merges in and becomes one with the Lord. Verses 17-19 explain at length the Sanskrit term, ‘shraddha’ whose nearest equivalent is faith + surrender.

The latent tendencies of our previous lives leave dormant impressions or sanskaras in us due to which one acquires a suitable body and corresponding circumstances to work out these sanskaras in subsequent births. Past tendencies are known by the kind of shraddha (faith) one has, in other words, faith reveals the kind of person one is or becomes by the dint of one’s faith. The highest faith for an aspirant, who has liberation as the goal of his life, is faith in the Guru. He faithfully follows the Guru’s words and, by practicing discrimination which prevents him from giving in to worldly temptations, serves Him through his actions. Happiness being our true nature or Self/Brahman, we search for it in the outside world whereas it is within ourselves. With discrimination, one acquires that Knowledge which leads to the highest state - Moksha. Lord

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Krishna says, 'those who are completely absorbed in me and who worship me single-mindedly, to them I give that Knowledge by which their intellect (buddhi) becomes completely and consistently surrendered to me (satatamyukta- naam).'

The essence of the talk was the Gita's famous verse: shraddha-van labhate-gyanam (the Highest Knowledge is gained by one who has the right faith.) The higher intellect is the instrument, which, when reflecting God, reaches God, merges and abides in Him like Bhagavan Ramana did - a shining example for us to follow.

-- *Rashmi Vyas*

### February 21st

**M**ahashivratri, the year's holiest day for the worship of Lord Shiva - observed on the new moon during the month of Magha - was celebrated with devotional fervour at Delhi's Ramana Kendra.

On a festival which marks the importance of overcoming ignorance, the shining presence of Bhagavan Ramana touched the heart of the devotees who had gathered in large numbers to receive his Grace.

According to the Puranas, the linga originally manifested as the Arunachala Hill. Hence for devotees it was a radiant experience entering the shrine constructed as a replica of the holy mountain, Arunachala, the very form of Lord Shiva. Their entry was greeted by the reverberation of the sacred mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' which set a soothing and meditative atmosphere for the devotional occasion.

In Padamalai, Sri Muruganar, one of Bhagavan's foremost devotees wrote: 'The mantra Shivayanamah on which you meditate will reveal itself within your heart to be your father and your mother'.

The puja started with Ganapati Homam followed by the recitation of Ramana Ashtotram and Upadesa Saram. Next came the offering of a ceremonial puja to the Shiva Linga.

Looking at Bhagavan's portrait with its gentle look of divine benevolence, one felt as if Bhagavan himself was presiding over the offering.

After the Abhishekam, there were chants from Shiva Ashtotram and Lin-

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gaAshtakam. Devotional songs in praise of Lord Shiva were also sung by the devotees followed by the 108 verses of Aksharamanamalai.

The celebrations concluded with Aarti and Pushpam Samarpanam with Prasad distributed amongst all.

--*Marie Elangovan*

### February 23rd

Sad-Darshanam, verse 20

Shri Shankarnarayanji tells us that each verse by itself is a beacon that leads to the Heart-cave. To just meditate on any verse and to allow Bhagavan to take over will surely lead us to realize the Self. Yet with full earnestness, Shri Shankarnarayanji explores each verse via references from other scriptures. Most importantly, he selects Ramana's own different explanations as recorded in Talks.

Sad-Darshanam Verse#20 states the world exists for the jnani and ajnani alike. However the ajnani stays limited within time and space, believing the ever changing jagat is all there is. A jnani sees all creation as exquisite perfection, shimmering and dancing on the surface of indivisible Oneness.

In Talk#33 Ramana compares Absolute truth with relative truths. Talk#65 refers to being engrossed in a film compared to remaining ever aware of the unchanging screen on which patterns of light come and go. Talk#265 claims that time, practice, bondage - all disappear when the Self is realized. Talk#455 describes the I-thought as being the first of a series of thoughts that creates the world which is further explained in Talk #514: the mind is not within the world, rather the world is within the mind.

Verse#20 is expressed by Adi Shankara as 'Brahma sat, jagatmithya; jivo-brahmaivanaparaa,' (Brahman is Truth, the world illusion; the Self is not different from Brahman). Also Krishna expresses the same idea in Uddhava Gita: 'maya mano mayam,' meaning, 'all varieties in the world are imaginary; verily there exists nothing other than Me (God, Brahman, Self).'

--*Bharati Mirchandani*

**FORM IV**

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I, Mr. Justice K. Ramamoorthy (Retd.), hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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1st March 2020

D.: “Not this - not this”. That is the teaching to the seeker. He is told that the Self is Supreme. How is it to be found?

M.: The Self is said to be the hearer, thinker, knower, etc. But that is not all. It is also described as the ear of ear, the mind of mind, etc.; and by what means to know the knower?

D.: But this does not say what the Self is.

M.: “Not this - not this”.

D.: It only negates.

M.: (Silence).

The devotee complains that the Self is not pointed out.

M.: A man wants to know what he is. He sees animals and objects around him. He is told: ‘You are not a cow, not a horse, not a tree, not this, not that, and so on’. If again the man asks saying ‘You have not said what I am,’ the answer will be, ‘It is not said you are not a man’. He must find out for himself that he is a man. So you must find out for yourself what you are.

You are told, ‘You are not this body, nor the mind, nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor anything you can think of; find out what truly you are’. Silence denotes that the questioner is himself the Self that is to be found. In a *svayamvara* the maiden goes on saying ‘no’ to each one until she faces her choice and then she looks downwards and remains silent.

Sri Bhagavan has a bandage on his finger. Someone asked, “What is that?” Bhagavan replied: “The finger came upon a knife”. (The Knife is inert, and relative to it the finger is a conscious agent).

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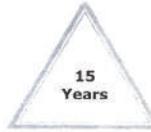
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*The results of Karma (Action) pass away,  
and yet leave seeds that cast the agent  
into an ocean of Karma.  
Karma yields no salvation*

*Ramana Maharshi {Upadesa Saram (2)}*

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